

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 LISBON 01920 150805Z

11

ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /031 W

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R 150647Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9599

S E C R E T LISBON 1920

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: ASYLUM REQUEST FROM FORMER MINISTER

SUMMARY: EMBASSY HAS TURNED ASIDE INDIRECT REQUEST FROM FORMER OVERSEAS MINISTER REBELLO DE SOUSA FOR ASYLUM. END SUMMARY

1. LATE AFTERNOON MAY 11, LONG-TIME PERSONAL FRIEND OF EMBOFF TELEPHONED HIM TO ASK IF EMBASSY WOULD GRANT ASYLUM TO FORMER OVERSEAS MINISTER BALTAZAR REBELLO DE SOUSA, WHO IS A CLOSE FRIEND OF PERSON WHO CALLED. INTERMEDIARY STATED THAT REBELLO DE SOUSA, WHO HAD BEEN CAREFREE FEW DAYS BEFORE, HAD BEEN DEEPLY UPSET AT ARREST ON MAY 10 OF FORMER PRESIDENT OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF GOVERNMENT'S POLITICAL ORGANIZATION A.N.P. REBELLO DE SOUSA REPORTEDLY BELIEVED THAT LEFTIST ELEMENTS NOT GENERAL SPINOLA WERE IN CONTROL OF DECISIONS ON SUCH MATTERS; CONVERSATION SAME DAY WITH FORMER EDUCATION MINISTER VEIGA SIMAO REPORTEDLY INCREASED REBELLO DE SOUSA'S CONCERN.

2. EMBOFF TOLD INTERMEDIARY THAT EMBASSY'S BEST JUDGMENT WAS THAT SPINOLA WAS IN FACT IN CONTROL AND THAT JUNTA, NOT ISOLATED ELEMENTS ELSEWHERE, WAS MAKING KEY DECISIONS. EMBOFF SUGGESTED THAT IF MAN LIKE REBELLO DE SOUSA, WHO HAD RATHER LIBERAL REPUTATION AND SOME POPULAR FOLLOWING, SHOULD SEEK ASYLUM

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IN FOREIGN EMBASSY, PRECEDENT WOULD HAVE WIDE

REVERBERATIONS. EMBOFF STATED HIS PERSONAL OPINION THAT REBELLO DE SOUSA WAS NOT IN IMMEDIATE DANGER OF MOB OR VIGILANTE ACTION AND STRESSED HIS PERSONAL CONVICTION THAT JUNTA WOULD ACT RESPONSIBLY AND HONORABLY WITH REGARD TO MEMBERS OF FORMER REGIME. EMBOFF STATED THAT AMERICAN LAWS MIGHT NOT PERMIT ASYLUM TO BE GRANTED IN CASES LIKE PRESENT ONE. INTERMEDIARY STATED THAT REBELLO DE SOUSA HAD ONCE BEEN AN A.N.P. LEADER, WHICH WOULD MAKE HIM NATURAL TARGET. IN ADDITION, INTERMEDIARY ARGUED THAT IF UNTARNISHED LIBERAL LIKE VEIGA SIMAO WAS ALARMED, MORE CONSERVATIVE FIGURE LIKE REBELLO DE SOUSA WOULD NATURALLY BE FRIGHTENED. INTERMEDIARY ASKED EMBOFF TO CONVEY REQUEST TO HIGHER AUTHORITY AND VOLUNTEERED TO TRANSMIT IMMEDIATELY VIEWS EXPRESSED BY EMBOFF TO REBELLO DE SOUSA.

3. AFTER CHECKING WITH DCM, EMBOFF TELEPHONED INTERMEDIARY (WHO HAD ALREADY LEFT TO MEET WITH REBELLO DE SOUSA) AND SPOKE WITH INTERMEDIARY'S ROOMMATE, ALSO FRIEND OF EMBOFF. ROOMMATE AGREED PASS WORD TO INTERMEDIARY THAT EMBASSY CONVINCED THAT SPINOLA WAS IN FACT IN CHARGE, AND INDEED EMBASSY HAD COMPELLING EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THAT CONCLUSION. (EMBOFF HAD IN MIND PERALTA CASE.) EMBOFF STATED THAT USG ASYLUM POLICY, UNLIKE THAT IN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, APPLIED ONLY IN CASES OF IMMINENT DANGER TO LIFE AND LIMB AND ASYLUM CEASED WHEN ASSURANCES OF INDIVIDUAL'S SAFETY RECEIVED FROM LOCAL AUTHORITIES, UNLESS THERE WERE GROUNDS FOR DOUBTING SUCH ASSURANCES. THESE CRITERIA DID NOT APPEAR TO BE APPLICABLE TO PRESENT CASE.

5. INTERMEDIARY FOR REBELLO DE SOUSA HAS NOT SINCE CONTACTED EMBOFF. EMBASSY WILL ADHERE TO POLICY SET FORTH ABOVE, IN LINE WITH GUIDANCE CONTAINED STATE A-270 OF JANUARY 11, 1972, UNLESS CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE RADICALLY OR DEPARTMENT ADVISES TO CONTRARY. SCOTT

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